

Reference Check Questions

Summary

This document contains a general list of questions to ask a candidate's professional references. Use the following guidelines when you are conducting all telephone reference checks:

- Introduce yourself and state the purpose of your call
- Confirm that it is a convenient time to talk
- Briefly describe the position for which the candidate has applied
- Confirm the relationship between the person giving the references and the candidate
- Verify basic duties such as job title, duties, salary, dates of employment
- Be consistent! Ask the same questions about all final candidates and weigh the information equally; what disqualifies one should be the basis for disqualifying any others.

Tips

Whenever possible, try to speak with a manager who directly supervised the candidate when you are checking references. Other managers and administrators will be more likely to stick to impartial confirmations of dates of employment when asked for a reference. You'll be able to learn more from the subtext of the conversation with a direct supervisor—listen for pauses, hesitation, or, most ominously, bitterness or hostility.

Questions to Ask Candidate's References

Candidate Information

Candidate Name	PCN Number	Search #	Reference Checked By

Reference Information

Reference's Name	Relationship to Candidate	Date of Conversation
<i>Example John Smith</i>	<i>Direct Manager</i>	<i>mm/dd/yyyy</i>

Verify the individual's dates of employment, title, and role.

Reference's Name	Brief Response
<i>Example John Smith</i>	<i>2005 to 3/2013, Accountant, collections of northwest region</i>

Would you hire or want to work with this individual again? If No, then why?

Reference's Name	Brief Response
<i>Example John Smith</i>	<i>Yes, dedicated employee.</i>

Determine the individual's advancement in the company; did she receive any promotions or demotions?

Reference's Name	Brief Response
<i>Example John Smith</i>	<i>2005 - 2010 Financial Tech, 2010 – 2013 Accountant</i>

What kind of duties and responsibilities were assigned to this individual? Did he/she go above and beyond what was required to complete the job satisfactorily?

Reference's Name	Brief Response
<i>Example John Smith</i>	<i>Financial Tech was an expert, trained other Technicians. Exceeded our expectations.</i>

What were the individual's strengths as an employee? Would you describe him/her as a hard worker?

Reference's Name	Brief Response
<i>Example John Smith</i>	<i>Detailed and customer service orientated. Very hard worker.</i>

Ask the reference to evaluate the employee's performance, specific to the tasks likely to be assigned in the new position. For example, "this position requires data analysis, in your opinion how was the individual's data analysis performance?"

Reference's Name	Brief Response
<i>Example John Smith</i>	<i>Very good with analyzing numbers and data. Expert in working with spreadsheets.</i>

Did this individual have any unexcused attendance issues (frequent absences, tardiness, etc)?

Reference's Name	Brief Response
<i>Example John Smith</i>	<i>Arrived 15 minutes early and stayed until the job was done.</i>

How would you describe the candidate's relationships with coworkers, subordinates?

Reference's Name	Brief Response
<i>Example John Smith</i>	<i>Professional, yet friendly</i>

In stressful situations, describe how this individual reacted. Please provide a specific example.

Reference's Name	Brief Response
<i>Example John Smith</i>	<i>Worked with upset customers. Listened, very calm, offered assistance.</i>

Is there anything else that I should know before moving the individual forward in the process?

Reference's Name	Brief Response
<i>Example John Smith</i>	<i>Great employee</i>

Optional Questions to Ask

- From your observation, has the candidate mainly been in the role of an implementer or initiator of projects or proposals?
- What are the candidate's key accomplishments or impact on the organization? In his/her department?
- What area of development could the candidate focus on?
- What was the nature and length of your relationship with the candidate?
- Can you describe this candidate's experience working as a member of a team?
- How did other co-workers view and interact with the candidate?
- What level of supervision did the candidate require?
- How would you describe the candidate's style of leadership?
- How would you describe the candidate's communication skills: verbal and written?
- How well does the candidate listen? How does she/he engage people?
- How would you describe the candidate's attitude towards their work?
- How did the candidate deal with conflicts?
- Did the candidate supervise others? If yes: if I spoke to those employees, how do you think they would describe his/her management style?